

MEMORANDUM

To: The House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

From: The Office of Revisor of Statutes

Date: 2/17/2025

Re: H.B. 2297, as Introduced; Authorizing the animal health commissioner to issue permits for raccoon ownership and requiring vaccinations, annual check-ups, educational program completion and compliance with breeding restrictions.

Permit Requirement

- It would be unlawful to possess a raccoon as a pet without a raccoon ownership permit from the animal health commissioner.

Health and Safety Requirements

- Raccoons would need to be vaccinated against rabies and other diseases and undergo annual veterinary checkups.
- Owners would be required to provide a safe and secure environment, with enclosures meeting specific standards.

Breeding Restriction

- Breeding raccoons in captivity would be prohibited unless licensed by the USDA.
- A framework would be established to connect permittees with licensed breeders.

Educational and Awareness Initiatives

- Applicants would need to complete an educational program on raccoon care before receiving a permit.
- Public awareness campaigns would be implemented to educate residents about raccoon ownership responsibilities.

Inspection and Compliance

- The commissioner could inspect permittees' premises once per year, with additional inspections if violations or complaints occur.

Rehoming and Euthanasia Provisions

- If a permittee is unfit to care for a raccoon, efforts would be made to rehome the animal, with euthanasia as a last resort.

Local Regulation Restrictions

- Local governments would be prohibited from enacting stricter raccoon ownership regulations than state law.

Fees and Penalties

- Fees for applications, renewals, inspections and transfers would be established, with penalties for violations.
- In extraordinary circumstances, permittees could appeal for fee deferments or waivers.

Implementation and Definitions

- The commissioner would adopt rules to implement these requirements.
- "Raccoon" would be defined as any animal wholly or partially of the species *Procyon lotor*.

H.B. 2297 would become effective upon publication in the statute book.